

People who apply for a new Social Security number must furnish at least two documents to establish age, identity, and U.S. citizenship or lawful noncitizen status. And now Social Security must verify the birth record for all U.S.-born applicants age one and older. We do this by contacting the custodian of the record, usually the local bureau of vital statistics, before issuing a Social Security number.

The SSA are taking this action to protect the American people in the aftermath of September 11th and the worldwide terrorist threat, and from the ongoing problem of identity theft. The new process prevents those with criminal intent from using false or stolen birth records to get a Social Security number. It will help ensure the integrity of Social Security number for everyone.

Currently it takes about two weeks for SSA to assign a number. This additional verification could add from three to twelve weeks to the process for receiving a Social Security number.

The change is effective June 1, 2002. This change affects U.S.-born people who are age one or older who:

1. Apply for an original Social Security card; or

2. Want to change the date of birth on their Social Security record.

While the SSA are continuing to look at all parts of our enumeration process to make improvements, the following changes have been made already:

The SSA assign Social Security numbers and issue cards to noncitizens for the sole purpose of applying for driver's licenses. This change makes Social Security numbers less accessible to people who may use the numbers for fraudulent purposes. The SSA will continue to assign numbers to noncitizens who have INS permission to work.

Beginning in July, when noncitizens request Social Security numbers, the SSA will verify their documents with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). If verification is not available on INS' online system, the SSA will contact the INS. This may delay receipt of a Social Security number by several weeks or months. The SSA is working closely with INS to minimize these delays.